Project-Based Learning for Elementary Grades

Maura Madigan
Maura Madigan is a school librarian in Fairfax County, Virginia, and the author of Learning Centers for School Libraries (ALA Editions, 2021), another AASL Standards-Based Learning series book. She’s worked in education for more than twenty-five years in the United States, South Korea, Japan, and the United Arab Emirates.
# CONTENTS

Acknowledgments ix
Introduction xi

## PART I

**CHAPTER 1**

PBL Basics 3

**CHAPTER 2**

Parts of a PBL Project 7

**CHAPTER 3**

Logistics 13

## PART II

**CHAPTER 4**

PBL Projects 23

Animal Habitats 23
Energy Source 33
Gingerbread Man Escape Challenge 42
History Game 49
Just Read! 59
Make Some Music 66
Math Museum 74
National Sport 80
Natural Disaster Survival 91
New Holiday 99
Playground Designer 108
Please Vote 118
Space House 125
Upcycled Fashions 132
Water Bottle Innovation 138
Project-Based Learning for Elementary Grades was written for school librarians to use independently in the school library or collaboratively with classroom and other educators. If you’re a classroom educator interested in facilitating these projects, I encourage you to talk to your school librarian about collaboration. School librarians have much to offer beyond resources and research skills lessons. Partnerships between a school librarian and classroom educator provide more enriching experiences for both the educators and learners.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK
This book is divided into two parts. Part I provides background information about project-based learning (PBL) and tips to help your projects run smoothly. Part II includes fifteen versatile PBL projects that can be used with learners in grades K–6, as well as chapters on collaboration, virtual projects, and how to create your own projects.

It can be tempting to jump right in and flip to chapter 4, “PBL Projects,” but resist that urge. Start by reading, or at least skimming, the chapters in part I even if you’re a PBL expert. Chapter 1, “The Basics,” defines PBL and discusses the benefits. This information might be helpful if you’re trying to convince another educator to collaborate with you. Chapter 2, “Parts of a PBL Project,” describes the essential parts of a PBL project, preparing you for what you’ll find in each project. Chapter 3, “Logistics,” lists things to consider before launching a project and provides helpful hints. You might want to revisit this section every once in a while.

The projects in chapter 4 are listed alphabetically. When deciding which project to use, you may want to look at table I.1, “PBL Projects and Standards,” at the end of this introduction. This table lists all the projects, with their driving questions and pertinent AASL Standards and content-area standards.

Chapter 5, “Virtual Projects,” provides tips on facilitating virtual and hybrid/concurrent projects. It also suggests ways to adapt in-person projects for use with virtual learning. If you’ll be collaborating with another educator, chapter 6, “Collaborative Projects,” will offer guidance. When you’re ready to design some of your own
projects, chapter 7, “How to Create a PBL Project,” gives you step-by-step directions and a PBL Project Planning Template (WS 7.1) to help.

**AASL STANDARDS AND CONTENT-AREA STANDARDS**

Specific Competencies from the *AASL Standards Framework for Learners* in AASL’s *National School Library Standards for Learners, School Librarians, and School Libraries* (AASL 2018, 34–39) are listed with each project in chapter 4 and in table I.1, “PBL Projects and Standards,” along with content-area standards. These Competencies are only suggestions. Feel free to focus on different AASL Standards and content-area standards or on more-specific state standards where those apply.

The Grow Domain of the *National School Library Standards* really comes into play with repeated practice and reflection, so try not to take the “one and done” approach. With each PBL project, learners gain more confidence and greater independence.

**YOU’RE ON YOUR WAY**

While you’re here, take a look at the “PBL Projects and Standards” table and think about what project you’d like to start with. It’s probably best to begin slowly, with just one project and grade level. Talk to your colleagues. Who might be interested in trying something new? Once you feel confident, branch out to form new collaborative relationships, perhaps facilitating a couple of projects during the same time frame. No matter where you begin, I hope that you enjoy these projects as much as your learners will.

**REFERENCE**

### PBL Projects and Standards

This table provides the driving question for each project and links applicable AASL Standards and content-area standards. This list is not meant to be exhaustive. Only the most pertinent standards appear.

The following content-area standards sets have been used:

- **Art:** National Core Arts Standards
- **English/Language Arts (ELA):** NCTE/IRA Standards for the English Language Arts
- **Mathematics:** NCTM Principles and Standards for School Mathematics
- **Music:** 2014 Music Standards (PK–8 General Music)
- **Physical Education:** National Standards for K–12 Physical Education
- **Science:** Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS)
- **Social Studies:** C3 Framework for Social Studies Standards
- **Technology:** ISTE Standards for Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PBL Projects</th>
<th>AASL Standards Framework for Learners</th>
<th>Content-Area Standards</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Animal Habitats</td>
<td>I.B.3. (Inquire/Create): Learners engage with new knowledge by following a process that includes generating products that illustrate learning.</td>
<td>ELA: 7. Students conduct research on issues and interests by generating ideas and questions, and by posing problems. They gather, evaluate, and synthesize data from a variety of sources (e.g., print and nonprint texts, artifacts, people) to communicate their discoveries in ways that suit their purpose and audience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I.C.4. (Inquire/Share): Learners adapt, communicate, and exchange learning products with others in a cycle that includes sharing products with an authentic audience.</td>
<td><strong>Science:</strong> Use tools and materials provided to design and build a device that solves a specific problem or a solution to a specific problem. (K-PS3-2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>III.D.1. (Collaborate/Grow): Learners actively participate with others in learning situations by actively contributing to group discussions.</td>
<td><strong>Technology:</strong> Innovative Designer 1.4.d. Students exhibit a tolerance for ambiguity, perseverance and the capacity to work with open-ended problems.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>V.B.1. (Explore/Create): Learners construct new knowledge by problem solving through cycles of design, implementation, and reflection.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Table continues on the next page.*
## PBL Projects and Standards (cont’d)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PBL Projects</th>
<th>AASL Standards Framework for Learners⁹</th>
<th>Content-Area Standards</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Energy Source</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>How can you, as part of the Department of Energy Management, select and promote a type of energy for your community?</td>
<td>I.B.1. (Inquire/Create): Learners engage with new knowledge by following a process that includes using evidence to investigate questions.</td>
<td>ELA: 7. Students conduct research on issues and interests by generating ideas and questions, and by posing problems. They gather, evaluate, and synthesize data from a variety of sources (e.g., print and nonprint texts, artifacts, people) to communicate their discoveries in ways that suit their purpose and audience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I.C.4. (Inquire/Share): Learners adapt, communicate, and exchange learning products with others in a cycle that includes sharing products with an authentic audience.</td>
<td>12. Students use spoken, written, and visual language to accomplish their own purposes (e.g., for learning, enjoyment, persuasion, and the exchange of information)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>II.B. (Include/Create): Learners adjust their awareness of the global learning community by:</td>
<td><strong>Science:</strong> Make a claim about the merit of a solution to a problem by citing relevant evidence about how it meets the criteria and constraints of the problem. (3-LS4-4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1. Interacting with learners who reflect a range of perspectives.</td>
<td>Obtain and combine information from books and/or other reliable media to explain phenomena or solutions to a design problem. (5-ESS3-1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Evaluating a variety of perspectives during learning activities.</td>
<td><strong>Technology:</strong> Creative Communicator 1.6.a. Students choose the appropriate platforms and tools for meeting the desired objectives of their creation or communication.</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>3. Representing diverse perspectives during learning activities.</td>
<td>Global Collaborator 1.7.d. Students explore local and global issues and use collaborative technologies to work with others to investigate solutions.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### TABLE 1

PBL Projects and Standards (cont’d)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PBL Projects</th>
<th>AASL Standards Framework for Learners</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gingerbread Man Escape Challenge</td>
<td>II.C. (Include/Share): Learners exhibit empathy with and tolerance for diverse ideas by:</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1. Engaging in informed conversation and active debate.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2. Contributing to discussions in which multiple viewpoints on a topic are expressed.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>V.B. (Explore/Create): Learners construct new knowledge by:</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1. Problem solving through cycles of design, implementation, and reflection.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2. Persisting through self-directed pursuits by tinkering and making.</td>
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<td>ELA:</td>
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<td>3. Students apply a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate texts. They draw on their prior experience, their interactions with other readers and writers, their knowledge of word meaning and of other texts, their word identification strategies, and their understanding of textual features (e.g., sound-letter correspondence, sentence structure, context, graphics).</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mathematics:</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Measurement: Apply appropriate techniques, tools, and formulas to determine measurements.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number and Operations: Compute fluently and make reasonable estimates.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Problem Solving: Solve problems that arise in mathematics and in other contexts.</td>
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<td>Science:</td>
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<td>Use tools and materials provided to design and build a device that solves a specific problem or a solution to a specific problem. (K-PS3-2)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Apply scientific ideas to solve design problems. (4-PS3-4)</td>
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(cont'd)
## TABLE I

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<td>History Game</td>
<td>I.B.3. (Inquire/Create): Learners engage with new knowledge by following a process that includes generating products that illustrate learning.</td>
<td>ELA: 7. Students conduct research on issues and interests by generating ideas and questions, and by posing problems. They gather, evaluate, and synthesize data from a variety of sources (e.g., print and nonprint texts, artifacts, people) to communicate their discoveries in ways that suit their purpose and audience. 8. Students use a variety of technological and informational resources (e.g., libraries, databases, computer networks, video) to gather and synthesize information and to create and communicate knowledge.</td>
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<td>Page 49</td>
<td>VI.C.2. (Engage/Share): Learners responsibly, ethically, and legally share new information with a global community by disseminating new knowledge through means appropriate for the intended audience.</td>
<td>Social Studies: D2.His.10.K-2: Explain how historical sources can be used to study the past. (Additional state and C3 standards will apply depending on content.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Just Read!</td>
<td>III.B.1. (Collaborate/Create): Learners participate in personal, social, and intellectual networks by using a variety of communication tools and resources.</td>
<td>Technology: Innovative Designer 1.4.d. Students exhibit a tolerance for ambiguity, perseverance and the capacity to work with open-ended problems.</td>
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<td>Page 59</td>
<td>V.C.3. (Explore/Share): Learners engage with the learning community by collaboratively identifying innovative solutions to a challenge or problem.</td>
<td>Global Collaborator 1.7.c. Students contribute constructively to project teams, assuming various roles and responsibilities to work effectively toward a common goal.</td>
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Just Read!

How can you, as a literacy expert, encourage learners to read more and love reading?

Page 59

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### PBL Projects

**Make Some Music**

How can you, as a musical instrument builder, create an instrument from recycled materials?

Page 66

**Math Museum**

How can you, as a museum specialist, design an exhibit for the new Math Museum?

Page 74

<table>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Make Some Music</strong></td>
<td>III.C.1. (Collaborate/Share): Learners work productively with others to solve problems by soliciting and responding to feedback from others. V.B. (Explore/Create): Learners construct new knowledge by: 1. Problem solving through cycles of design, implementation, and reflection. 2. Persisting through self-directed pursuits by tinkering and making.</td>
<td><strong>Art:</strong> Anchor Standard 1. Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work. Anchor Standard 3. Refine and complete artistic work. <strong>ELA:</strong> 7. Students conduct research on issues and interests by generating ideas and questions and by posing problems. They gather, evaluate, and synthesize data from a variety of sources (e.g., print and nonprint texts, artifacts, people) to communicate their discoveries in ways that suit their purpose and audience. <strong>Music:</strong> MU.Cr1.2a Improvise rhythmic and melodic patterns and musical ideas for a specific purpose.</td>
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<tr>
<td>TABLE 1.1</td>
<td>PBL Projects and Standards (cont’d)</td>
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<td><strong>AASL Standards Framework for Learners</strong></td>
<td><strong>Content-Area Standards</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Sport</td>
<td>I.A.2. (Inquire/Think): Learners display curiosity and initiative by recalling prior and background knowledge as context for new meaning.</td>
<td>ELA: 8. Students use a variety of technological and informational resources (e.g., libraries, databases, computer networks, video) to gather and synthesize information and to create and communicate knowledge. 12. Students use spoken, written, and visual language to accomplish their own purposes (e.g., for learning, enjoyment, persuasion, and the exchange of information).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How can you, as part of the President’s Council on Sports, Fitness, and Nutrition, create a new national sport that combines the features of other sports? Page 80</td>
<td>III.D.1. (Collaborate/Grow): Learners actively participate with others in learning situations by actively contributing to group discussions.</td>
<td>Physical Education: Standard 2. The physically literate individual applies knowledge of concepts, principles, strategies and tactics related to movement and performance. Standard 5. The physically literate individual recognizes the value of physical activity for health, enjoyment, challenge, self-expression and/or social interaction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural Disaster Survival</td>
<td>I.C. (Inquire/Share): Learners adapt, communicate, and exchange learning products with others in a cycle that includes: 2. Providing constructive feedback. 3. Acting on feedback to improve. 4. Sharing products with an authentic audience.</td>
<td>ELA: 7. Students conduct research on issues and interests by generating ideas and questions, and by posing problems. They gather, evaluate, and synthesize data from a variety of sources (e.g., print and nonprint texts, artifacts, people) to communicate their discoveries in ways that suit their purpose and audience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How can you, as part of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), create a product or idea to protect people and property from natural disasters? Page 91</td>
<td>IV.A. (Curate/Think): Learners act on an information need by: 2. Identifying possible sources of information. 3. Making critical choices about information sources to use.</td>
<td>Science: Communicate solutions with others in oral and/or written forms using models and/or drawings that provide detail about scientific ideas. (K-ESS3-3) Use tools and materials provided to design and build a device that solves a specific problem or a solution to a specific problem. (K-PS3-2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>V.B.1. (Explore/Create): Learners construct new knowledge by problem solving through cycles of design, implementation, and reflection.</td>
<td>Technology: Innovative Designer 1.4.d. Students exhibit a tolerance for ambiguity, perseverance and the capacity to work with open-ended problems.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PBL Projects | AASL Standards Framework for Learners9 | Content-Area Standards
--- | --- | ---
New Holiday | I.D.3. (Inquire/Grow): Learners participate in an ongoing inquiry-based process by enacting new understanding through real-world connections. II.A.3. (Include/Think): Learners contribute a balanced perspective when participating in a learning community by describing their understanding of cultural relevance and placement within the global learning community. IV.B.1. (Curate/Create): Learners gather information appropriate to the task by seeking a variety of sources. | Art: Anchor Standard 1. Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work. Anchor Standard 6. Convey meaning through the presentation of artistic work. ELA: 4. Students adjust their use of spoken, written, and visual language (e.g., conventions, style, vocabulary) to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and for different purposes. 7. Students conduct research on issues and interests by generating ideas and questions, and by posing problems. They gather, evaluate, and synthesize data from a variety of sources (e.g., print and nonprint texts, artifacts, people) to communicate their discoveries in ways that suit their purpose and audience. Social Studies: D2.Civ.3.3-5. Examine the origins and purposes of rules, laws, and key U.S. constitutional provisions. D4.3.3-5. Present a summary of arguments and explanations to others outside the classroom using print and oral technologies (e.g., posters, essays, letters, debates, speeches, and reports) and digital technologies (e.g., Internet, social media, and digital documentary).

Playground Designer | III.B.2. (Collaborate/Create): Learners participate in personal, social, and intellectual networks by establishing connections with other learners to build on their own prior knowledge and create new knowledge. V.B. (Explore/Create): Learners construct new knowledge by: 1. Problem solving through cycles of design, implementation, and reflection. 2. Persisting through self-directed pursuits by tinkering and making. | Art: Anchor Standard 1. Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work. Mathematics: Connections: Recognize and apply mathematics in contexts outside of mathematics. Geometry: Analyze characteristics and properties of two- and three-dimensional geometric shapes and develop mathematical arguments about geometric relationships. Science: Use tools and materials provided to design and build a device that solves a specific problem or a solution to a specific problem. (K-PS3-2)

(cont’d)
Please Vote
How can you, as a historian, create a political campaign advertisement for a historical candidate?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PBL Projects</th>
<th>AASL Standards Framework for Learners⁹</th>
<th>Content-Area Standards</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>V.A. (Explore/Think): Learners develop and satisfy personal curiosity by:</td>
<td>ELA:  6. Students apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions (e.g., spelling and punctuation), media techniques, figurative language, and genre to create, critique, and discuss print and nonprint texts.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Reading widely and deeply in multiple formats and write and create for a variety of purposes.</td>
<td>Social Studies: D2.His.3.3-5. Generate questions about individuals and groups who have shaped significant historical changes and continuities. D2.His.16.3-5. Use evidence to develop a claim about the past.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Reflecting and questioning assumptions and possible misconceptions.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Engaging in inquiry-based processes for personal growth.</td>
<td>Technology: Knowledge Constructor 1.3.a. Students plan and employ effective research strategies to locate information and other resources for their intellectual or creative pursuits. Knowledge Constructor 1.3.c. Students curate information from digital resources using a variety of tools and methods to create collections of artifacts that demonstrate meaningful connections or conclusions.</td>
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<tr>
<td>V.I.B. (Engage/Create): Learners use valid information and reasoned conclusions to make ethical decisions in the creation of knowledge by:</td>
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<tr>
<td>1. Ethically using and reproducing others’ work.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Acknowledging authorship and demonstrating respect for the intellectual property of others.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>PBL Projects</td>
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<td>Content-Area Standards</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| Space House  | I.A. (Inquire/Think): Learners display curiosity and initiative by:  
1. Formulating questions about a personal interest or a curricular topic.  
2. Recalling prior and background knowledge as context for new meaning. | ELA:  
7. Students conduct research on issues and interests by generating ideas and questions, and by posing problems. They gather, evaluate, and synthesize data from a variety of sources (e.g., print and nonprint texts, artifacts, people) to communicate their discoveries in ways that suit their purpose and audience. |
| I.B. (Explore/Create): Learners construct new knowledge by problem solving through cycles of design, implementation, and reflection. | Science:  
Use tools and materials provided to design and build a device that solves a specific problem or a solution to a specific problem. (K-PS3-2)  
Communicate solutions with others in oral and/or written forms using models and/or drawings that provide detail about scientific ideas. (K-ESS3-3)  
Generate and compare multiple solutions to a problem based on how well they meet the criteria and constraints of the design solution. (4-PS4-3, 4-ESS3-2) |
| ELA:  
7. Students conduct research on issues and interests by generating ideas and questions, and by posing problems. They gather, evaluate, and synthesize data from a variety of sources (e.g., print and nonprint texts, artifacts, people) to communicate their discoveries in ways that suit their purpose and audience. | Technology:  
Knowledge Constructor 1.3.d. Students build knowledge by actively exploring real-world issues and problems, developing ideas and theories and pursuing answers and solutions.  
Innovative Designer 1.4.b. Students select and use digital tools to plan and manage a design process that considers design constraints and calculated risks. |

(cont’d)
### TABLE 1.1

**PBL Projects and Standards** (cont’d)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PBL Projects</th>
<th>AASL Standards Framework for Learners⑨</th>
<th>Content-Area Standards</th>
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</thead>
</table>
| **Upcycled Fashions** | I.C. (Inquire/Share): Learners adapt, communicate, and exchange learning products with others in a cycle that includes: 2. Providing constructive feedback. 3. Acting on feedback to improve. 4. Sharing products with an authentic audience. | **Art:**  
Anchor Standard 1. Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work.  
Anchor Standard 3. Refine and complete artistic work.  
Anchor Standard 6. Convey meaning through the presentation of artistic work. |
|                    | V.B. (Explore/Create): Learners construct new knowledge by: 1. Problem solving through cycles of design, implementation, and reflection. 2. Persisting through self-directed pursuits by tinkering and making.  | **ELA:** 7. Students conduct research on issues and interests by generating ideas and questions, and by posing problems. They gather, evaluate, and synthesize data from a variety of sources (e.g., print and nonprint texts, artifacts, people) to communicate their discoveries in ways that suit their purpose and audience. |
|                    | V.I.A. (Engage/Think): Learners follow ethical and legal guidelines for gathering and using information by: 1. Responsibly applying information, technology, and media to learning. 2. Understanding the ethical use of information, technology, and media. | **Science:** Obtain and combine information from books and/or other reliable media to explain phenomena or solutions to a design problem. (5-ESS3-1; see also 3-ESS2-2, 4-ESS3-1) |

Page 132
## Notes


Part I
Education is not the filling of a bucket, but the lighting of a fire.” These words are spoken at graduations and conferences, printed on posters and coffee mugs, all meant to inspire. Yeats is often credited with this poetic quote, but his authorship is difficult to prove (Strong 2013). It doesn’t really matter. The meaning clearly resonates with many. Learning isn’t a passive act that is finished when one’s brain is full of facts. Instead, education is the spark or catalyst for further learning and action. Facts may be forgotten, but skills can be mastered for life. Project-based learning (PBL) lights the fire.

WHAT IS PBL?

PBL is a type of experiential learning in which learners take an active role in their education. They learn by doing. Projects start with a question or real-world problem to guide research and exploration. Learners usually work in small groups to find solutions, create products, and present their projects to an audience. The emphasis is on the process rather than the product, with students learning as much from their mistakes as their successes.

The essential parts of PBL projects—entry event, driving question, learner choice, inquiry, product creation, feedback and revision, authentic audience, presentation, and reflection—are discussed in greater detail in chapter 2. PBL projects offer numerous benefits as listed in the following subsection.
Benefits
This type of hands-on learning offers natural differentiation and caters to multiple learning styles. Project-based learning:

- Empowers learners
- Builds resiliency
- Fosters independence
- Engages learners
- Targets multiple standards
- Introduces different career options
- Builds creative and critical thinking and collaboration skills

Problem-based learning, also called PBL, is a subset of project-based learning. The main difference is that problem-based learning projects usually end with the solution. This book focuses on project-based learning projects, which tend to be longer, with groups going on to create and present their products.

WHY DOES PBL BELONG IN THE SCHOOL LIBRARY?

PBL projects are an engaging and efficient way to focus on the AASL Standards Framework for Learners in the National School Library Standards. Most projects could address all six Shared Foundations. Because it’s difficult to target all the AASL Standards at once, only a few suggested standards are listed with each project.

PBL doesn’t just target learner standards. It also appears in the Curate Shared Foundation of the AASL Standards Framework for School Libraries: “The school library provides problem-based learning experiences and environments by: (1) using resources and technology to foster inquiry and scaffold mastery of skills necessary for learning to progress” and (3) “focusing on the effective use of a wide range of resources to foster information skills appropriate to content areas” (AASL 2018, School Library IV.A.1., IV.A.3.). By offering PBL projects, you’ll be meeting learner, school librarian, and school library standards.

PBL, school libraries, and inquiry go hand in hand in hand. Inquiry and research skills could arguably be the essence of school library instruction. Learners need to master certain skills for academic and future success.

So research is important, but it’s not the only reason you should consider PBL. Just as school librarians play many roles, school libraries serve multiple purposes. They’re often called the heart of the school, a place where everyone belongs. For many learners, the school library is a safe haven where they can explore without fear of failure. PBL challenges learners in new ways, so a positive environment is important.
Access—to learners and resources—is also important. Elementary school librarians on fixed schedules see learners regularly for lessons. They’re able to facilitate PBL for all learners, ensuring equitable access to these valuable learning experiences. School librarians with flexible schedules can collaborate with classroom educators (read more on this in chapter 6, “Collaborative Projects”). Resources, such as books and possibly makerspace materials and tools, make the school library an ideal location for PBL.

The interdisciplinary nature of PBL projects also makes them well suited to school library instruction, which isn’t subject-specific. School librarians teach skills, not content, which provides enormous freedom. They have the flexibility to collaborate with any educator, on any subject, at any time, or they can choose to facilitate PBL projects on their own. School librarians don’t often have the same constraints as classroom educators, such as grading and following a pacing guide.

This freedom can be shared with learners who can explore new ideas and work at their own pace. Classroom educators often have to stop a lesson or project prematurely because they need to move on to the next unit. Most school librarians don’t have to adhere to these guidelines. Projects can be expanded and extended to include teachable moments. They can embrace the organic nature of inquiry, which doesn’t always fit neatly into a time line.

REFERENCES


INDEX

A

AASL Standards Framework for Learners (AASL)
Animal Habitats, 23
Energy Source, 33
Gingerbread Man Escape Challenge, 42
History Game, 49
Just Read! 59
listed with each project, xii
Make Some Music, 66
Math Museum, 74
National Sport, 80
Natural Disaster Survival, 91
New Holiday, 99
PBL project creation and, 161-162
PBL project for focus on, 4
for PBL projects, 169
“PBL Projects and Standards” table, xiii-xv
Playground Designer, 108
Please Vote, 118
Space House, 125
Upcycled Fashions, 132
Water Bottle Innovation, 138
AASL Standards Framework for School Libraries
Curate Shared Foundation, 4
virtual learning, access to, 147
accessibility, 18
adaptation, 164-166
Ada’s Violin: The Story of the Recycled Orchestra of Paraguay (Hood), 67
advertising
campaign advertisement in Please Vote project, 118-124
in Just Read! project, 60
for Water Bottle Innovation project, 138, 139
American Association of School Librarians (AASL)
on collaboration, 154, 155
on feedback, 10, 16
“Measuring Learner Growth,” 18
PBL projects in school library, 4
on sharing products with audience, 11
American Museum of Natural History, 25
American Ninja Warrior (television show), 7
Anderson, Kirsten, 50
Animal Habitats
AASL Standards/content-area standards, xiii, 23, 24
adaptation of, 150
Animal Habitats Learner Directions
Worksheet, 29
Animal Habitats Planning Sheet A, 30
Animal Habitats Planning Sheet B, 31
Animal Habitats Presentation Sheet, 32
collaborative project sample, 157-159
driving question, 24
entry events, 25
Extended Project, 27-28
materials for, 25-26
Mini Project, 26-27
Need-To-Know Chart example, 10
preparation for, 25
scenario, 24
vocabulary for, 24
Animal Habitats Learner Directions Worksheet, 25, 26, 29
Animal Habitats Planning Sheet A, 25, 30
Animal Habitats Planning Sheet B, 25, 31
Animal Habitats Presentation Sheet, 28, 32
Aronson, Sarah, 109
Art standards
Make Some Music, xvii, 66
Math Museum, xvii, 74
New Holiday, xix, 99
Playground Designer, xix, 108
Upcycled Fashions, xxii, 132
| assessment | classroom, 156 |
| of PBL project, 18 | classroom educators |
| of virtual projects, 149–150 | audience for PBL project presentations, 164 |
| Assessment Rubric | collaboration with, 153, 160 |
| for collaborative PBL projects, 18 | Collaborative Project Sample: Animal |
| template, 179–180 | Habitats, 157–159 |
| audience, 11, 164 | collaborative projects with, 153–160 |
| | PBL project length/timing, 162 |

**B**

Basher, Simon, 75

*Basher Basics: Math, A Book You Can Count On* (Basher), 75

*Basher Science: Algebra and Geometry* (Basher), 75

Beaty, Andrea, 8

Bethel, Ellie, 139

*Board Game Builder: Milton Bradley* (Slater), 50

board games, 49–58

books

for Animal Habitats entry event, 25

for entry event, 7, 8

for Gingerbread Man Escape Challenge entry events, 43

for History Game entry event, 50

for Make Some Music entry event, 67

for Math Museum entry event, 75

for National Sport entry event, 81

for Natural Disaster Survival entry event, 92

for New Holiday entry event, 100

for Please Vote entry event, 119

for Upcycled Fashions entry event, 133

for Water Bottle Innovation entry event, 139

breakout rooms, 150

Britannica School, 35

Britannica School Elementary, 25, 34

*Bruce’s Big Storm* (Higgins), 92

Buck Institute for Education: PBL Works, 169

**C**

campaign advertisement, 118–124

Carmen’s World Orchestra (PBS Kids), 67

*Celebrations Around the World: The Fabulous Celebrations You Won’t Want to Miss* (Halford), 100

challenges

Gingerbread Man Escape Challenge, 42–48

in Upcycled Fashions project, 132, 133, 137

Virtual Project Challenges and Solutions, 148

choice, 8

citation, 121

Clanton, Ben, 119
INDEX | 183

Make Some Music, 66
Math Museum, 74
National Sport, 80
Natural Disaster Survival, 91
New Holiday, 99
PBL project creation and, 161–162
for PBL projects, 169
“PBL Projects and Standards” table, xiii–xxiii
Playground Designer, 108
Please Vote, 118
Space House, 125
Upcycled Fashions, 132
Water Bottle Innovation, 138

Create domain
Energy Source, xiv, 33
History Game, 49
New Holiday, xix, 99
Playground Designer, 108
Please Vote, xx, 118
See also Explore/Create domains; Inquire/
Create domains

criticism, 16
Crow, Nosy, 25
Curate Shared Foundation, 4
Curate/Create domains, xix, 99
Curate/Think domains, xviii, 91
Czajak, Paul, 119

D
A Day in the Life Aboard the International Space
Station (NASA), 126
deadlines, 14
debate, 33
DePalma, Kate, 100
design
Animal Habitats, 23–32
Gingerbread Man Escape Challenge, 42–48
Make Some Music, 66–73
Math Museum, 74–79
Natural Disaster Survival, 91–98
Playground Designer, 108–115
Space House, 125–131
Upcycled Fashions, 132–137
Water Bottle Innovation, 138–146
Design Squad, 126
digital models
in Playground Designer, 108, 112–113
in Space House, 128–129
DiPucchio, Kelly, 119
Disaster Detector (game), 92
display, 15
See also presentation
driving question
adaptation of existing project and, 164, 166
for Animal Habitats, 24
for Energy Source, 33, 34
for Gingerbread Man Escape Challenge, 42–43
guidance about, 8
for History Game, 49
inquiry in PBL, 9
for Just Read!, 59
for Make Some Music, 66
for Math Museum, 74
for National Sport, 80
for Natural Disaster Survival, 92
for New Holiday, 99
for PBL project, 162, 163
for Playground Designer, 108
for Please Vote, 119
product creation and, 10
for Space House, 125
for Upcycled Fashions, 132
for Water Bottle Innovation, 139
Duck tape, 14

E
eco-friendly clothing, 132–137
ecosystems, 155
education, 3
educators
Collaborative Project Sample: Animal
Habitats, 157–159
collaborative projects, 153–160
partners for collaborative projects, 156–157
role in PBL project, 17
See also classroom educators; school librarians
Edutopia, 169
ELA standards
See English/Language Arts (ELA) standards
elections, 118–124
elementary school librarians, 5
Endeavour’s Long Journey (Olivas), 126
Enderle, Dotti, 43
Energy Source
AASL Standards/content-area standards, xiv,
33
driving question for, 34
Energy Source Learner Directions, 38
Energy Source Planning Sheet A, 39
Energy Source Planning Sheet B, 40
Energy Source Presentation Sheet, 41

alastore.ala.org
Energy Source (cont’d)

entry events, 34
Extended Project, 36–37
materials for, 35
Mini Project, 35–36
preparation for, 34–35
scenario for, 33
vocabulary for, 34
websites/databases, 35
Energy Source Learner Directions, 35–36, 38
Energy Source Planning Sheet A, 36–37, 39
Energy Source Planning Sheet B, 36–37, 40
Energy Source Presentation Sheet, 36, 41
Engage/Create domains
  History Game, 49
  Please Vote, xx, 118
Engage/Share domains, xvi
Engage/Think domains, xxii, 132
English learners, 17, 18
English/Language Arts (ELA) standards
  Animal Habitats, xiii, 24
  Energy Source, xiv, 33
  Gingerbread Man Escape Challenge, xv
  History Game, xvi, 49
  Just Read!, xvi, 59
  Make Some Music, xvii, 66
  National Sport, xviii, 80
  Natural Disaster Survival, xviii, 91
  New Holiday, xix, 99
  Please Vote, xx, 118
  Space House, xxi, 125
  Upcycled Fashions, xxii, 132
  Water Bottle Innovation, xxiii, 138
entry events
  advice about/ideas for, 7–8
  for Animal Habitats, 25
  for collaborative projects, 156
  for Energy Source, 34
  for Gingerbread Man Escape Challenge, 43
  for History Game, 50
  for Just Read!, 60–61
  for Make Some Music, 67
  for Math Museum, 75
  for National Sport, 81
  for Natural Disaster Survival, 92
  for New Holiday, 100
  for PBL project, 163
  for Playground Designer, 109
  for Please Vote, 119
  for Space House, 126
  for Upcycled Fashions, 133
  for Water Bottle Innovation, 139

environment
  Energy Source, 33–41
  Natural Disaster Survival, 91–98
  PBL in school library, 4–5
  Upcycled Fashions, 132–137
  Water Bottle Innovation, 138–146
  Environmental Protection Agency, 139
equity, 147
events
  See entry events
Exacto knives, 139
experts
  as audience for PBL project presentation, 11
  expert advice in entry event, 7
  for PBL project, 164
Explore/Create domains
  Animal Habitats, xiii, 23
  Gingerbread Man Escape Challenge, xv
  Make Some Music, xvii, 66
  Math Museum, xvii, 74
  National Sport, xviii, 80
  Natural Disaster Survival, xviii, 91
  Playground Designer, xix, 108
  Space House, xxi, 125
  Upcycled Fashions, xxii, 132
  virtual learning for, 147
  Water Bottle Innovation, xxiii, 138
Explore/Grow domains, xxiii, 138
Explore/Share domains, xvi, 59
Explore/Think domains, xx, 118
Extended Project
  Animal Habitats, 25, 27–28
  Energy Source, 33, 34, 36–37
  Gingerbread Man Escape Challenge, 43, 45–46
  History Game, 49, 50, 51, 53–55
  Just Read!, 59, 60, 61, 62–63
  Make Some Music, 66, 68, 69–70
  Math Museum, 74, 75, 76, 77
  musical notation for, 67
  National Sport, 82, 83–84
  Natural Disaster Survival, 94
  New Holiday, 100–101, 102–103
  Playground Designer, 110, 112–113
  Please Vote, 120, 121–122
  Space House, 126, 127, 128–129
  Upcycled Fashions, 133, 134, 135–136
  Water Bottle Innovation, 138, 140, 142–143

Extreme Weather: Climate Feedback Loop
(National Geographic), 92
failure, 17
fashion, Upcycled Fashions, 132–137
fashion show, 136
Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), 91, 92, 95
feedback
  from educator, 17
  for learner collaboration, 16
  in Make Some Music project, 69
  for Natural Disaster Survival Extended Project, 94
  in PBL project, 10
  for Water Bottle Innovation project, 141, 142
Fidgit Power, 34
field trip, 109
Flipgrid
  for commercials for Please Vote project, 120
  for Energy Source videos, 34
  for Just Read! videos, 60
  for Please Vote project, 119
flipped classroom approach, 147
Fractured Fairytale Play Project, 164–165
French, Jess, 139
G
gallery walk
  for Animal Habitats entry event, 25
  for collaborative projects, 156
  for Energy Source entry event, 34
  as entry event, 7
  for Natural Disaster Survival entry event, 92
  for New Holiday entry events, 100
  for Please Vote project, 119
  for Water Bottle Innovation project, 139
games
  for Animal Habitats entry event, 25
  History Game, 49–58
Generation Genius, 34, 35
GID (Guided Inquiry Design), 9
Gingerbread Man Escape Challenge
  Gingerbread Man Escape Challenge Learner Directions, 44, 47–48
  The Gingerbread Man Loose in the School (Murray), 43
Google Docs
  for collaborative project notes, 156
taking notes in, 26
  for Water Bottle Innovation project, 143
Google Drawings, 110, 127
Google Forms, 60
Google Translate, 18
Grace for President (DiPucchio), 119
graphic organizers, 150, 163
“Green Energy Hunt” (PBS KIDS Video/Design Squad Global), 34
groups
  for collaborative projects, 155
  creating, 17
  for Energy Source project, 34
  of learners for virtual projects, 151
  for Playground Designer project, 109
  for virtual projects, 149
Grow domain
  New Holiday, xix, 99
reflection, importance of, 12
reflection as key feature of, 12
repeated practice of, xii
Water Bottle Innovation, xxiii, 138
See also Collaborate/Grow domains
Guided Inquiry Design (GID), 9
H
habitats
  See Animal Habitats
Halford, Katy, 100
Haney, Johannah, 92
Higgins, Ryan T., 92
History Game
  AASL Standards/content-area standards, xvi, 49
driving question for, 49
taking notes in, 26
  Extended Project, 53–55
History Game Instructions, 58
History Game Learner Directions, 56
History Game Planning Sheet, 57
materials for, 51
Mini Project, 52–53
preparation for, 51
tips for, 50
websites/tools for virtual games, 51
alastore.ala.org
History Game Instructions
filling in parts of, 50
for History Game Extended Project, 54, 55
for History Game Mini Project, 52
worksheet, 58

History Game Learner Directions
for History Game Extended Project, 53
for History Game Mini Project, 52
worksheet, 56

History Game Planning Sheet
filling in parts of, 50
for History Game Extended Project, 54
for History Game Mini Project, 52
worksheet, 57

holidays, New Holiday project, 99–107

Hood, Susan
Ada’s Violin: The Story of the Recycled Orchestra of Paraguay, 67
The Last Straw: Kids vs. Plastics, 139

hot glue gun, 15, 139

“How the Inventor of Mario Designs a Game”
(YouTube video), 50

hybrid projects, 151

I

I Survived the California Wildfires, 2018 (Tarshis), 92
Iggy Peck, Architect (Beaty), 8

Include/Create domains, xiv, 33
Include/Share domains, xv
Include/Think domains, xix, 99
Inquire Shared Foundation, 9, 10

Inquire/Create domains
Animal Habitats, xiii, 23
Energy Source, xiv, 33
History Game, xvi, 49

Inquire/Grow domains, xix, 99

Inquire/Share domains
Animal Habitats, xiii, 23
Energy Source, xiv, 33
Natural Disaster Survival, xviii, 91

Upcycled Fashions, xxii, 132

Inquire/Think domains
Math Museum, xvi, 74
National Sport, xvii, 80
Space House, xxi, 125
Water Bottle Innovation, xxii, 138

inquiry
Animal Habitats Need-To-Know Chart
Example, 10

PBL in school library, 4, 5
PBL/GID models, 9

International Space Station (ISS), 125
internet connection, 148
Iseman, Matt, 7
Izzy Gizmo (Jones), 8

J
Jameson, Karen, 25
Jones, Pip, 8

Juneteenth, 99

Just Like Rube Goldberg: The Incredible True Story of the Man Behind the Machines (Aronson), 109

Just Read!
AASL Standards/content-area standards, xvi, 59
driving question for, 59
entry events, 60–61
Extended Project, 62–63
Just Read! Learner Directions, 64
Just Read! Planning Sheet, 65
Mini Project, 61–62
scenario for, 59
tips for, 60

Just Read! Learner Directions, 61, 64
Just Read! Planning Sheet, 62, 65

K
Keep It Simple, Rapunzel! The Fairy-Tale Physics of Simple Machines (STEM-Twisted Fairy Tales series) (Troupe), 109

KIDS BOP, 136
Kids Zone 3: International Space Station (NASA website), 126

L
Landfill Harmonica (movie), 67
The Last Straw: Kids vs. Plastics (Hood), 139
leadership, 156
learner choice, 8, 164

learner directions
Animal Habitats Learner Directions
Worksheet, 29
Energy Source Learner Directions, 38
Gingerbread Man Escape Challenge Learner Directions, 47–48

History Game Learner Directions, 56
Just Read! Learner Directions, 64
Make Some Music Learner Directions, 71–72
Math Museum Learner Directions, 78

National Sport Learner Directions, 85–86
Natural Disaster Survival Learner Directions, 95–96
New Holiday Learner Directions, 104–105
Playground Designer Learner Directions, 114–115
Please Vote Learner Directions, 123
Space House Learner Directions, 130
Upcycled Fashions Learner Directions, 137
Water Bottle Innovation Learner Directions, 144–145
learner interests, 161
learner surveys, 60, 62
learners
assessments of PBL project by, 18
collaboration for PBL projects, 15–17
collaborative projects, 153–160
feedback/revision, 10
grouping of, 17, 151
PBL project entry event by, 163
presentation by, 11
product creation by, 10
project-based learning for, 3
reflection at end of PBL project, 12
virtual PBL projects, challenges/solutions for, 148
virtual projects for, 149–150
See also project-based learning
Let’s Celebrate! Special Days Around the World
(DePalma), 100
librarians
collaborative projects, 153–160
educator’s role in PBL, 17
PBL in school library, 4–5
See also school librarians
The Library Gingerbread Man (Enderle), 43
Library of Congress, 119
Liter of Light project, 139
Living on ISS (NASA), 126
logistics
assessment, 18
collaboration, 15–17
displaying/preserving work, 15
educator’s role, 17
materials for PBL projects, 15
modifications to PBL projects, 18
space for PBL projects, 13
time for PBL projects, 13–14
Fractured Fairytale Play Project, 164–165
U.S. History Biography Project, 165
Make Some Music
AASL Standards/content-area standards, xvii, 66
driving question for, 66
driver events, 67
Extended Project, 69–70
Make Some Music Learner Directions, 71–72
Make Some Music Presentation Sheet, 73
materials for, 67–68
Mini Project, 68–69
preparation for, 67
scenario for, 66
tips for, 67
vocabulary for, 66
Make Some Music Learner Directions, 68, 71–72
Make Some Music Presentation Sheet, 69, 70, 73
materials for Animal Habitats, 25–26
for Energy Source, 35
for Gingerbread Man Escape Challenge, 43–44
for History Game, 51
for Make Some Music, 67–68
for Math Museum, 75–76
for National Sport, 82
for Natural Disaster Survival, 92–93
for New Holiday, 100–101
for PBL project, 15, 163–164
for Playground Designer, 110
for Please Vote, 120
for Space House, 127
for Upcycled Fashions, 133–134
for Water Bottle Innovation, 140
Math Museum
AASL Standards/content-area standards, xvii, 74
driving question for, 74
driver events for, 75
Extended Project, 77
materials for, 75–76
Math Museum Learner Directions, 78
Math Museum Presentation Sheet, 79
Mini Project, 76
preparation for, 75
scenario for, 74
vocabulary for, 74
Math Museum Learner Directions, 76, 78
Math Museum Presentation Sheet, 76, 77, 79
math stations, 75
Mathematics standards
Gingerbread Man Escape Challenge, xv
Math Museum, xvii, 74
Playground Designer, xix, 108
Madigan, Maura
See also collaborative projects facilitated by, 154–155
M
McNamara, Margaret, 119
media literacy, 118–124
memorials, 100, 103
mentors, 17
Messner, Kate, 25
Michael Recycle (Bethel), 139
Miller, Tim, 109
mini lessons, 149
Mini Project
   Animal Habitats, 26–27
   Energy Source, 33, 35–36
   Gingerbread Man Escape Challenge, 44–45
   History Game, 52–53
   Just Read!, 59, 61–62
   Make Some Music, 68–69
   Math Museum, 76
   National Sport, 82–83
   Natural Disaster Survival, 93–94
   New Holiday, 101–102
   Playground Designer, 111
   Please Vote, 118, 120–121
   Space House, 127–128
   Upcycled Fashions, 134–135
   Water Bottle Innovation, 138, 140–141
Miranda, Anne, 109
mixed groups, 151
Miyamoto, Shigeru, 50
models
   See digital models; 3D models; 2D models
   modifications, to PBL project, 18, 163
Monopoly Mastermind: Charles B. Darrow (Polinsky), 50
Monster Needs Your Vote (Czajak), 119
The Most Magnificent Thing (Spires), 8
movies, 67
multigrade projects, 17
Murray, Laura, 43
museum exhibits, 74–79
music
   for fashion show, 135, 136
   Make Some Music, xvii, 66–73
   musical compositions, 70
   musical instruments, 66–73
   musical notation, 67
   My First Book of Baseball: A Rookie Book (Sports Illustrated Kids), 81

N
NASA, 126, 128
National Geographic
   for Energy Source project, 35
for Natural Disaster Survival, 92
National Geographic Kids
   educational video games for History Game, 50
   for Energy Source project, 34, 35
   plastic pollution resources, 140
National Geographic Kids Everything Sports: All the Photos, Facts, and Fun to Make You Jump! (Zweig), 81
National School Library Standards for Learners, School Librarians, and School Libraries (AASL)
   for assessment ideas, 18
   Assessment Rubric, 179–180
   on collaboration, 153, 155
   on feedback, 16
   Inquire Shared Foundation, 9
   listed with each project, xii
   PBL project for focus on, 4
   reflection in Grow Domain, 12
National Sport
   AASL Standards/content-area standards, xviii, 80
   driving question for, 80
   entry events, 81
   Extended Project, 83–84
   materials for, 82
   Mini Project, 82–83
   National Sport Learner Directions, 85–86
   National Sport Planning Sheet, 87–88
   National Sport Presentation Sheet, 89–90
   preparation for, 81–82
   scenario for, 80
   tips for, 81
   National Sport Learner Directions, 82, 85–86
   National Sport Planning Sheet, 83, 87–88
   National Sport Presentation Sheet
      for National Sport Extended Project, 84
      for National Sport Mini Project, 83
      worksheet, 89–90
Natural Disaster Survival
   AASL Standards/content-area standards, xviii, 91
   collaborative project, 155
   driving question for, 92
   entry events, 92
   Extended Project, 94
   materials for, 92–93
   Mini Project, 93–94
   Natural Disaster Survival Learner Directions, 95–96
   Natural Disaster Survival Planning Sheet, 97
   Natural Disaster Survival Presentation Sheet, 98
preparation for, 92
products created by class, 163
scenario for, 91
Natural Disaster Survival Learner Directions, 93, 95–96
Natural Disaster Survival Planning Sheet, 93, 97
Natural Disaster Survival Presentation Sheet, 93, 94, 98
natural disasters, 161
Natural Disasters! With 25 Science Projects for Kids (Haney), 92
Need-To-Know chart
for Animal Habitats project, 10, 26
for collaborative projects, 156
for Energy Source Mini Project, 36
for Gingerbread Man Escape Challenge, 44–45
for History Game, 52, 54
for Just Read! 61
for learner questions recorded on, 9
for Make Some Music Mini Project, 68
for Math Museum Mini Project, 76
for National Sport Mini Project, 82
for Natural Disaster Survival, 93
for New Holiday, 101, 102
for Playground Designer, 111, 112
for Please Vote Mini Project, 120, 121
for Space House Mini Project, 127
for Upcycled Fashions, 134, 135
for virtual projects, 150
for Water Bottle Innovation project, 141, 142
Need-To-Know Sheet
for Animal Habitats project, 27, 28
for History Game Extended Project, 52
for Make Some Music Extended Project, 69
for Math Museum Extended Project, 77
for National Sport Extended Project, 83
for Playground Designer Extended Project, 112
template, 171
Nepris, 7
New Holiday
AASL Standards/content-area standards, xix, 99
driving question for, 99
entry events, 100
Extended Project, 102–103
materials for, 100–101
Mini Project, 101–102
New Holiday Learner Directions, 104–105
New Holiday Planning Sheet, 106
New Holiday Presentation Sheet, 107
preparation for, 100
scenario for, 99
New Holiday Learner Directions
for New Holiday Extended Project, 102
for New Holiday Mini Project, 101
worksheet, 104–105
New Holiday Planning Sheet
for New Holiday Extended Project, 103
for New Holiday Mini Project, 101
worksheet, 106
New Holiday Presentation Sheet
display of, 103
for New Holiday Extended Project, 103
for New Holiday Mini Project, 102
worksheet, 107
Nintendo Innovator: Hiroshi Yamauchi (Thomas), 50
Niven, Felicia Lowenstein, 133
O
Olivas, John Danny, 126
One Plastic Bag: Isatou Ceesay and the Recycling Women of the Gambia (Paul), 133, 139
Oregon Trail, 50
Osborne, Mary Pope, 92
Over and Under the Rainforest (Messner), 25
P
pacing, 14
pacing guide, 154–155
partners, 156–157
See also collaboration
pathfinder
for Animal Habitats, 25
for Energy Source, 36
for History Game, 51
for Just Read! 61, 62
for Make Some Music, 67, 68, 69
for National Sport, 82, 83
for New Holiday, 101, 102
for PBL project, 163
for Upcycled Fashions, 133, 134, 135
for virtual projects, 150
for Water Bottle Innovation, 140, 143
Paul, Miranda, 133, 139
PBL
See project-based learning
PBL (problem-based learning), 4, 155
PBL project
See project-based learning (PBL) project
“PBL Projects and Standards” table
copy of, xiii–xxiii
for project decision, xi, xii
PBS Kids Games, 50, 67
PBS Kids Video
“Green Energy Hunt,” 34
“Penguin Habitat,” 25
Seismic Shake-Up, 92
Victoria Garcia, Aerospace Engineer (Design Squad), 126
videos for Playground Designer project, 109
PebbleGo
for animal habitat videos, 25
Biography, 121
educational video games for History Game, 50
Peer-Reflection Sheet
for Animal Habitats project, 28
for assessment of PBL project, 12, 18
for Energy Source Extended Project, 37
for Gingerbread Man Escape Challenge, 46
for History Game Extended Project, 55
for Just Read! Extended Project, 63
for Make Some Music Extended Project, 70
for Math Museum Extended Project, 77
for National Sport Extended Project, 84
for Natural Disaster Survival Extended Project, 94
for New Holiday Extended Project, 103
for Playground Designer project, 113
for Please Vote project, 122
for Space House project, 129
template, 177
for Upcycled Fashions project, 136
for Water Bottle Innovation project, 143
“Penguin Habitat” (PBS KIDS Video), 25
photos, 15
Physical Education standards, xviii, 80
See gallery walk
Pinka-Perfect Band (PBS Kids), 67
Pixie, 110, 127
planning, 162
planning sheets
Animal Habitats Planning Sheet A, 30
Animal Habitats Planning Sheet B, 31
Energy Source Planning Sheet A, 39
Energy Source Planning Sheet B, 40
History Game Planning Sheet, 57
Just Read! Planning Sheet, 65
National Sport Planning Sheet, 87–88
Natural Disaster Survival Planning Sheet, 97
New Holiday Planning Sheet, 106
PBL Project Planning Template, 167–168
Playground Designer Planning Sheet, 116
Please Vote Planning Sheet, 124
Space House Planning Sheet, 131
plastic water bottles, 138–146
Playground Designer
AASL Standards/content-area standards, xix, 108
driving question for, 108
entry events, 109
Extended Project, 112–113
materials for, 110
Mini Project, 111
Playground Designer Learner Directions, 114–115
Playground Designer Planning Sheet, 116
Playground Designer Presentation Sheet, 117
preparation for, 109–110
scenario for, 108
tips for, 109
vocabulary for, 108
websites/tools for virtual models, 110
Playground Designer Learner Directions
for Mini Project, 111
for Playground Designer Extended Project, 112
worksheet, 114–115
Playground Designer Planning Sheet
for Playground Designer Extended Project, 112
for Playground Designer Mini Project, 111
worksheet, 116
Playground Designer Presentation Sheet, 113, 117
Please Vote
AASL Standards/content-area standards, xx, 118
driving question for, 119
entry events, 119
Extended Project, 121–122
materials for, 120
Mini Project, 120–121
Please Vote Learner Directions, 123
Please Vote Planning Sheet, 124
preparation for, 120
scenario for, 118–119
tips for, 119
vocabulary for, 119
Please Vote Learner Directions, 120, 123
Please Vote Planning Sheet, 121, 124
Pokémon Designer: Satoshi Tajiri (Polinsky), 50
Polinsky, Paige V., 50
politics, 118–124
preparation
for Animal Habitats, 25
for Energy Source, 34–35
for Gingerbread Man Escape Challenge, 43
INDEX

for History Game, 51
for Make Some Music, 67
for Math Museum, 75
for National Sport, 81–82
for Natural Disaster Survival, 92
for New Holiday, 100
for Playground Designer, 109–110
for Please Vote, 120
for Space House, 126
for Upcycled Fashions, 133
for Water Bottle Innovation, 140

presentation
for Animal Habitats project, 28
display of finished projects, 15
for Energy Source, 36, 37
Energy Source Presentation Sheet, 41
for Gingerbread Man Escape Challenge, 45, 46
for History Game, 55
of Just Read! projects, 62
for Make Some Music, 70
for Math Museum, 74, 76, 77
of National Sport projects, 83, 84
of Natural Disaster Survival projects, 94
of New Holiday projects, 102, 103
of PBL project, 11, 164
of Playground Designer projects, 111, 113
of Please Vote projects, 121, 122
of Space House projects, 128, 129
of Upcycled Fashions projects, 136
of Water Bottle Innovation projects, 141, 143

presentation sheets
Animal Habitats Presentation Sheet, 32
Energy Source Presentation Sheet, 41
Make Some Music Presentation Sheet, 73
Math Museum Presentation Sheet, 79
National Sport Presentation Sheet, 89–90
Natural Disaster Survival Presentation Sheet, 98
New Holiday Presentation Sheet, 107
Playground Designer Presentation Sheet, 117
Water Bottle Innovation Presentation Sheet, 146

preservation, 15
President’s Council on Sports, Fitness, and Nutrition, 80, 85
principal, 155
problem-based learning (PBL), 4, 155
products
product creation in PBL project, 10
from virtual projects, 150

Progress Sheet
for Animal Habitats project, 28

for Energy Source Extended Project, 37
for Gingerbread Man Escape Challenge, 45
for History Game Extended Project, 54
for Just Read! Extended Project, 63
for Math Museum Extended Project, 77
for Natural Disaster Survival Extended Project, 94
for Please Vote project, 122
for Space House Extended Project, 129
template, 173–174
for virtual projects, 149
for Water Bottle Innovation project, 142

Project Runway, 133
project-based learning (PBL)
benefits of, 4
collaborative projects, 153–160
definition of, 3
Guided Inquiry Design vs., 9
overview of book’s coverage of, xi–xii
in school library, reasons for, 4–5
virtual PBL projects, challenges/solutions for, 148
virtual projects, adaptation of projects into, 149–150

project-based learning (PBL) project
assessment of, 18
collaboration, 15–17
collection about, 169
creation of, 161–166
displaying/preserving work, 15
educator’s role, 17
materials for, 15
modifications to, 18
PBL Project Planning Template, 167–168
“PBL Projects and Standards” table, xiii–xxiii
space for, 13
time for, 13–14

project-based learning (PBL) project, creation of
AASL Standards/content-area standards, 162
adaptation of existing project, 164–166
driving question/scenario for, 162
entry event, 163
experts/support, 164
PBL Project Planning Template, 167–168
presentations, 164
project length/timing, 162
resources/materials for, 163–164
starting place, 161–162
suggestions/modifications, 163

project-based learning (PBL) project, parts of
authentic audience, 11
driving question, 8

alastore.ala.org
project-based learning (PBL) project, parts of (cont’d)
- entry event, 7–8
- feedback/revision, 10
- inquiry, 9–10
- learner choice, 8
- presentation, 11
- product creation, 10
- reflection, 12

project-based learning (PBL) projects
- Animal Habitats, 23–32
- Energy Source, 33–41
- Gingerbread Man Escape Challenge, 42–48
- History Game, 49–58
- Just Read! 59–65
- Make Some Music, 66–73
- Math Museum, 74–79
- National Sport, 80–90
- Natural Disaster Survival, 91–98
- New Holiday, 99–107
- Playground Designer, 108–117
- Please Vote, 118–124
- Space House, 125–131
- Upcycled Fashions, 132–137
- Water Bottle Innovation, 138–146

Q
questions
- Animal Habitats Need-To-Know Chart Example, 10
- driving question for PBL project, 8
- for Just Read! learner surveys, 60
- Need-To-Know chart for, 9
- See also driving question

R
reading, 59–65
reading incentive programs, 60
recycled materials
- Make Some Music projects with, 66–73
- Upcycled Fashions, 132–137
- Water Bottle Innovation, 138–146
- Recycled Orchestra of Paraguay, 66, 67, 71
reflection
- assessment of PBL project, 18
- in PBL project, 12
- See also Peer-Reflection Sheet; Self-Reflection Sheet
- “Renewable vs. Nonrenewable Resources” (Generation Genius), 34

research
- for Animal Habitats project, 23, 26–27
- in collaborative project, 156
- Energy Source project, 33–41
- for Gingerbread Man Escape Challenge, 42, 43, 45–46
- for History Game, 49, 54, 56
- inquiry, 9–10
- PBL and, 3–4
- PBL project length/timing and, 162

resources
- about PBL, 169
- for National Sport Mini Project, 83
- for PBL project, 163–164
- See also websites; worksheets
revision, 10
Rosie Revere, Engineer (Beaty), 8
runway, 136

S
safety, 139
scavenger hunt, 43
scenario
- for Animal Habitats, 24
- for Energy Source, 33
- for Gingerbread Man Escape Challenge, 42
- for Just Read! 59
- for Make Some Music, 66
- for Math Museum, 74
- for National Sport, 80
- for Natural Disaster Survival, 91
- for New Holiday, 99
- for PBL project, 162
- for Playground Designer, 108
- for Please Vote, 118–119
- for Space House, 125
- for Upcycled Fashions, 132
- for Water Bottle Innovation, 138–139

schedule, 162

school librarians
- collaboration, worth of, 160
- Collaborative Project Sample: Animal Habitats, 157–159
- collaborative projects, 153–160
- PBL project length/timing, 162
- PBL projects in school library, 4–5

school library
- entry event for collaborative project at, 156
- Just Read! project, 59–65
- PBL in, reasons for, 4–5
- space for PBL projects, 13

alastore.ala.org
Science standards
Animal Habitats, xiii, 24
  collaborative projects, adaptation of, 155
Energy Source project, xiv, 33
Gingerbread Man Escape Challenge, xv
Natural Disaster Survival, xviii, 91
Playground Designer, xix, 108
Space House, xxi, 125
Upcycled Fashions, xxii, 132
Water Bottle Innovation, xxiii, 138
See/Think/Wonder graphic organizer, 8
Seismic Shake-Up (PBS KIDS Video), 92
Self-Reflection Sheet
  for Animal Habitats project, 28
  for assessment of PBL project, 12, 18
  for Energy Source Extended Project, 37
  for Gingerbread Man Escape Challenge, 46
  for History Game Extended Project, 55
  for Just Read! Extended Project, 63
  for Make Some Music Extended Project, 70
  for Math Museum Extended Project, 77
  for National Sport Extended Project, 84
  for Natural Disaster Survival Extended Project, 94
  for New Holiday Extended Project, 103
  for Playground Designer project, 113
  for Please Vote project, 122
  for Space House project, 129
  template, 175
  for Upcycled Fashions project, 136
  for Water Bottle Innovation project, 143
sentence stems, 16
shapes, 108–115
Shapr3D, 110, 127
Share domain
  Just Read! xvi, 59
  Make Some Music, xvii, 66
  See also Inquire/Share domains
Share Fair, 11
simple machines, 108–115
Simple Machines in My Makerspace (Miller & Sjonger), 109
Sjonger, Rebecca, 109
Sketchup, 110, 127
Slater, Lee, 50
slideshow
  for New Holiday, 100, 101, 103
  for virtual projects, 149–150
  for Water Bottle Innovation, 139
Smithsonian Science Education Center website, 92
Social Studies standards
History Game, xvi, 49
New Holiday, xix, 99
Please Vote, xx, 118
space, 13
Space House
  AASL Standards/content-area standards, xx, 125
  driving question for, 125
  entry events, 126
  Extended Project, 128–129
  materials for, 127
  Mini Project, 127–128
  preparation for, 126
  scenario for, 125
  Space House Learner Directions, 130
  Space House Planning Sheet, 131
  websites/tools for virtual models, 127
  Space House Learner Directions, 127, 128, 129, 130
  Space House Planning Sheet, 128, 129, 131
  Space Scouts: Base Builder or Space Scouts: Sean’s Rescue Quest (PBS KIDS Games), 126
  Spires, Ashley, 8
  sports, National Sport project, 80–90
  Sports Illustrated Kids, 81
  sports station, 81
standards
  PBL project creation and, 161–162
  PBL project for focus on, 4
  See also AASL Standards Framework for Learners (AASL); content-area standards;
  National School Library Standards for Learners, School Librarians, and School Libraries (AASL)
  statues, 100, 103
  Stewart, Whitney, 100
  Story Time From Space project, 126
  Strong, Robert, 3
  suggestions, 163
  support, 164
  surveys, 60, 62

T
Tangled: A Story About Shapes (Miranda), 109
Tarshis, Lauren, 92
Technology standards
Animal Habitats, xiii, 24
Energy Source, xiv, 33
History Game, xvi, 49
Just Read! xvi, 59
Math Museum, xvii, 74
alastore.ala.org
Technology standards (cont’d)
   Natural Disaster Survival, xviii, 91
   Please Vote, xx, 118
   Space House, xxi, 125
   Water Bottle Innovation, xxiii, 138
Think domain
   Natural Disaster Survival, xviii, 91
   New Holiday, xix, 99
   Please Vote, xx, 118
See also Inquire/Think domains
Thomas, Rachael L., 50
   3D models
   Animal Habitats, virtual project, 150
   for Math Museum Extended Project, 77
   for Natural Disaster Survival project, 91, 163
   for Playground Designer project, 108, 112–113
   resources/materials for, 163–164
   Space House Extended Project, 129
   websites/tools for virtual models, 110
   time
   for PBL project, 13–14
   PBL project length/timing, 162
   Time for Kids, 140
   Tinkercad, 110, 127
   tips
   for adapting projects, 149–150
   for Animal Habitats, 24
   for collaborative projects, 156–157
   for Energy Source, 34
   for fashion show, 136
   for Gingerbread Man Escape Challenge, 43
   for History Game, 50
   for Just Read! 60
   for Make Some Music, 67
   for Math Museum, 74
   for National Sport, 81
   for Playground Designer, 109
   for Please Vote, 119
   for Space House, 126
   for Upcycled Fashions project, 133
   for Water Bottle Innovation project, 139
   tools
   for Space House, 127
   for virtual models, 110
   Toy Trailblazers series, 50
   Troupe, Thomas Kingsley, 109
   Twister on Tuesday (Osborne), 92
   2D models, 93, 129

Upcycled Fashions
   AASL Standards/content-area standards, xxii, 132
   driving question for, 132
   ecosystems adaptation of, 155
   entry events, 133
   expert audience for, 11
   Extended Project, 135–136
   materials for, 133–134
   Mini Project, 134–135
   preparation for, 133
   scenario for, 132
   Upcycled Fashions Learner Directions, 137
   Upcycled Fashions Learner Directions, 134, 135, 137
   US Energy Information Administration, 35
   U.S. History Biography Project, 165–166

V
   Vanilla Ice, 16, 17
   Vegara, Maria Isabel Sanchez, 133
   Victoria Garcia, Aerospace Engineer (Design Squad), 126
   video games, History Game, 49–58
   videos
   for Animal Habitats entry event, 25
   for Energy Source project, 34
   as entry event, 7
   for Just Read! Extended Project, 63
   for National Sport entry event, 81
   for Natural Disaster Survival entry event, 92
   for PBL project entry event, 163
   for Playground Designer project, 109
   for Space House entry event, 126
   for Space House Mini Project, 128
   for Upcycled Fashions entry event, 133
   for Water Bottle Innovation entry event, 139
   for Water Bottle Innovation project, 141
   virtual field trip, 25
   virtual learning, 147
   virtual models
   Space House Extended Project, 128–129
   websites/tools for, 110, 127
   virtual museum tour, 75
   Virtual Project Challenges and Solutions, 148
   virtual projects
   adapting projects, 149–150
   concurrent/hybrid projects, 151
   introduction to, xi
   virtual learning, offering, 147
   Virtual Project Challenges and Solutions, 148
   Vivienne Westwood (Little People, BIG DREAMS, 24) (Vegara), 133
vocabulary

- for Animal Habitats, 24
- for Energy Source, 34
- for Make Some Music, 66
- for Math Museum, 74
- for Playground Designer, 108
- for Please Vote, 119

Vote for Me! (Clanton), 119
Vote for Our Future! (McNamara), 119

W

Water Bottle Innovation

- AASL Standards/content-area standards, xxiii, 138
- collection of water bottles for, 163–164
- driving question for, 139
- entry events, 139
- Extended Project, 142–143
- materials for, 140
- Mini Project, 140–141
- preparation for, 140
- scenario for, 138–139
- Water Bottle Innovation Learner Directions, 144–145
- Water Bottle Innovation Presentation Sheet, 146

Water Bottle Innovation Learner Directions, 140, 141, 142, 144–145
Water Bottle Innovation Presentation Sheet, 141, 143, 146

Weather 101 (National Geographic), 92

- websites
  - for Energy Source project, 35
  - for virtual games, 51
  - for virtual models, 110, 127
- What a Waste: Trash, Recycling, and Protecting Our Planet (French), 139
- What Do You Celebrate? Holidays and Festivals Around the World (Stewart), 100
- Who Was Milton Bradley? (Anderson), 50
- Who’s Hiding at the Beach? (Crow), 25
- “Wind Turbines” (Britannica School Elementary), 34
- Wixie, 110, 127
- Woodland Dreams (Jameson), 25

- worksheets
  - Animal Habitats Learner Directions Worksheet, 29
  - Animal Habitats Planning Sheet A, 30
  - Animal Habitats Planning Sheet B, 31
  - Assessment Rubric, 179–180
  - History Game Instructions, 58

History Game Learner Directions, 56
History Game Planning Sheet, 57
Just Read! Learner Directions, 64
Just Read! Planning Sheet, 65
Make Some Music Learner Directions, 71–72
Make Some Music Presentation Sheet, 73
Math Museum Learner Directions, 78
Math Museum Presentation Sheet, 79
National Sport Learner Directions, 85–86
National Sport Planning Sheet, 87–88
National Sport Presentation Sheet, 89–90
Natural Disaster Survival Learner Directions, 95–96
Natural Disaster Survival Planning Sheet, 97
Natural Disaster Survival Presentation Sheet, 98
Need-To-Know Sheet, 171
New Holiday Learner Directions, 104–105
New Holiday Planning Sheet, 106
New Holiday Presentation Sheet, 107
PBL Project Planning Template, 167–168
Peer Reflection Sheet, 177
Playground Designer Learner Directions, 114–115
Playground Designer Planning Sheet, 116
Playground Designer Presentation Sheet, 117
Please Vote Learner Directions, 123
Please Vote Planning Sheet, 124
Progress Sheet, 173–174
Self Reflection Sheet, 175
Space House Learner Directions, 130
Space House Planning Sheet, 131
Upcycled Fashions Learner Directions, 137
Water Bottle Innovation Learner Directions, 144–145
Water Bottle Innovation Presentation Sheet, 146

World Book Kids, 50
writing, 118–124

Y

YouTube

- Liter of Light video, 139
- Project Runway’s “Unconventional Materials” challenges, 133
- video for History Game, 50
- videos for Water Bottle Innovation entry event, 139

Z

- Zweig, Eric, 81